

VZCZCXRO2023
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #2561/01 3001020
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 271020Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5035
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 002561

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

FOR AF/SPG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/27/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MCAP](#) [UG](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: SENIOR SPLA COMMANDER BLAMES SAF, LRA FOR RECENT
ATTACKS

REF: KHARTOUM 02527

Classified By: Classified by CDA Chief Eric Whitaker, Reasons: Section
1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Major General Thomas Cirillo, a senior commander in the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and Deputy Commander of the Joint Integrated Units (JIUs) for all of Sudan, blames the Sudanese Government's Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Ugandan rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) for a week of violence around Juba that left over 40 people dead. The Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) is under increasing pressure to make a clear public statement about the events. GoSS President Salva Kiir told a church congregation October 22 that 15 SAF personnel were in custody, and were responsible for attacks on the outskirts of Juba. Various GoSS officials say the government is prepared to make public the identity of the SAF detainees and other evidence against the northern army. SPLA sources add that they have completed a "preliminary" investigation, and will press for a joint investigation in conjunction with SAF through the JIUs. While LRA complicity in the recent violence bodes ill for ongoing peace talks, proof of SAF participation in attacks within a few miles of Juba would expose a more fundamental weakness in the implementation of the North-South Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). End Summary.

----- --
Cirillo: SAF Elements Attack Outskirts of Juba
----- --

¶2. (C) Cirillo told ConGen October 23 that both SAF and LRA were behind the recent violence. The evidence against SAF is explosive, he admitted, and centers on events in the village of Gumbo on the nights of October 18 and 19. The violence in Gumbo followed several days of escalating conflicts attributed to the LRA, including brutal ambushes on major roads east and south of Juba earlier in the day on October 18 (reftel). According to Cirillo, unknown assailants entered Gumbo, a village one mile south east of Juba on the night of October 18, attacked and looted several homes, and killed four people. SPLA forces deployed to Gumbo on October 19 and counterattacked when the assailants returned for a second night of violence. Two SPLA soldiers, and two individuals believed to be members of SAF, were killed in the fighting.

¶3. (C) SPLA forces encircled the village, according to Cirillo, and captured several of the attackers during the October 19 skirmish and during a cordon-and-search operation the following morning. Seven suspects were detained during the initial operation. Nine others were seized later in the day on the outskirts of Gumbo, Cirillo reported. Several of the detainees were in possession of SAF identification cards, Cirillo claimed. Under interrogation, he said, several of the detainees have admitted that they are attached to

specific SAF units. At least some of these units are SAF components of the JIUs -- SPLA/SAF forces that Cirillo, the JIU deputy commander, describes as "joint," but not "integrated." Cirillo said a SAF officer attached to the JIUs arrived in Gumbo on October 20 to claim the bodies of the two SAF soldiers killed in the conflict, but SPLA officials refused to turn them over.

14. (C) All of the detainees are Southern Sudanese, except for two Darfurians and a woman from northern Uganda, Cirillo reported. Another SPLA source says the woman has since been released.

Cautious Response

15. (C) Cirillo's account is generally corroborated by other GoSS sources, including GoSS President Salva Kiir. Kiir told a church congregation October 22 that 15 SAF personnel were in custody in connection with the recent violence. GoSS has so far made no definitive statement on the fighting, however, despite hours of intense, high-level meetings by senior political and military officials. Some military officers were believed to be pressing for a more vigorous military response. In view of the seriousness of the charges, however, the GoSS appears inclined to move cautiously. Cirillo said the SPLA's preliminary investigation would be concluded on or about October 24, and that he expected some of the evidence against SAF to be made public. GoSS would also ask for a joint SAF/SPLA investigation through the JIU, Cirillo said.

KHARTOUM 00002561 002 OF 002

LRA Role

16. (C) Another area of confusion is the alleged role of the LRA. Cirillo said the LRA was behind all the incidents but those in Gumbo, including two grisly road ambushes in which passengers were variously shot, macheted, burned to death, and, according to another contact, in one instance decapitated. An LRA spokesperson at the ongoing peace talks in Juba denies responsibility. GoSS's chief mediator at the peace talks, Vice President Riek Machar, has told participants that the violence is an "internal" Sudanese matter, according to a UN official attached to the talks. Cirillo and other SPLA sources, together with Ugandan security personnel attending the talks, continue to assert LRA complicity. There were at least three other skirmishes involving the LRA in the days leading up to the attacks, these sources point out, and the road ambushes were consistent with LRA tactics.

17. (C) "Juba was a center of the LRA" before the GoSS took over, Cirillo explained. "They were supplied and trained here, and they still have many collaborators and agents." Cirillo asserts that SPLA intelligence officials recently learned that SAF had supplied a significant quantity of ammunition to the LRA. (Note: This is not the first time Cirillo and other senior GoSS officials have made these allegations. In previous cases, the evidence they provided was refuted. End note.) He further alleges that SAF was behind the recent violence, including that carried out by the LRA. Cirillo acknowledged that the GoSS, through the SPLA, was simultaneously providing significant quantities of food and other supplies to LRA groups, both at the assembly areas designated under the current peace process and at other locations.

Growing Tensions

¶8. (C) The violence comes amidst growing allegations that Khartoum is redeploying plainclothes military and intelligence personnel in and around Juba, providing clandestine assistance to various militia and otherwise acting to undermine the CPA. Transport and Roads Minister Rebecca Garang told ConGen October 3 that Khartoum intelligence operatives had been spotted in increasing numbers in Juba. Cirillo claims several such operatives are currently in SPLA custody. A diplomatic colleague here reports that a Roman Catholic nun, long resident in Juba, also claims to have seen several Khartoum operatives who were familiar to her from the years before the CPA was signed. Both Riek Machar and GoSS Health Minister Theophilus Ochang Lotti assert that the SAF is providing arms and other support to remnants of the former Equatoria Defense Force (EDF), a militia that collaborated closely with both the Khartoum government and the LRA prior to the CPA. Ochang was a leader of the EDF before joining the SPLM and the GoS
¶S.

¶9. (C) Officials cite several factors underlying growing tensions between Khartoum and the semi-autonomous southern region. Several senior GoSS officials have told us that they believe Southern support for UN deployment in Darfur has been a major irritant to the national government in Khartoum. They believe Khartoum was also angered by Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni's October 21 visit to Juba, which Khartoum claimed was without its authorization (septel). GoSS success in incorporating various militia and political factions formerly allied with Khartoum also has been an annoyance, officials say.

Comment

¶10. (C) If the SPLM can prove that the SAF was involved in this week's violence around Juba, it would be a sharp blow to prospects for a peaceful implementation of the CPA. Although the GoSS is responding cautiously, there is significant anger at Khartoum's alleged role in this violence, both in official circles and among the general population. The SAF has been implicated in previous attacks, but the SPLM has so far been unable to prove its allegations. A credible investigation of these events, perhaps with international participation, might help bring clarity and defuse the growing tension.
POWERS